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Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jflm



Book review

Expert psychiatric evidence, Keith Rix. Royal College of Psychiatrists (2011). Vol. xxx. 289 pp., ISBN: 978-1-908-020-32-1

Most psychiatric expert witnesses will know, or know of, Keith Rix. This guide for psychiatric expert witnesses is typical of him, and shows his many years of thoughtful experience. Psychiatrists are always being asked for reports in criminal, civil, family matters, inquests and tribunal; but trainee psychiatrists receive virtually no training in inescapable element of their future careers, even if they decide not to take a special interest in expert witness work. Inexperienced expert witnesses often find the law, with its rules, practices, statutes, guidelines anxiety-provoking.

Help is at hand in this concise yet thorough and practical new book. Although there is arguably no substitute for focussed training and experience in the preparation of Court reports, most of the skills gap demonstrated by all too many psychiatrists can be at least partly bridged by this single volume *tour d'horizon*.

Keith Rix has produced an easily accessible and clearly written overview of the justice system, always focused on the role of the (psychiatric) expert witness and the production of reports. He

also covers aspects of assessment that are important for Court assessments.

The book is strongest in its account of the criminal courts, which is where Rix works mainly. However, the chapters on personal injury, family cases, inquests, etc., while less detailed are certainly not superficial and contain invaluable pearls of wisdom.

There is also a useful section on jurisdictions in the British Isles, including the Channel Islands, and a helpful chapter on *Going to Court*.

Ending the book is a series of eleven appendices, covering model formats ranging from the letter of response to a request for a report, a timesheet, self-certificates, and, at the end, a specimen criminal report.

This book will appeal to experienced and inexperienced psychiatric witnesses and I recommend it unreservedly.

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Available online 27 May 2012